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Continued Efforts to Address Food Insecurity During the COVID-19 Delta Variant Surge

When the COVID-19 pandemic reached Los Angeles County (the County), our residents were met with increased hunger as a result of being out of school and work. The issue of food insecurity was compounded by supply chain disruptions early in the pandemic that resulted in empty grocery store shelves. Food pantries also closed or had limited supplies due to labor shortages, restrictions on food donations, and uncertainty about the virus.

The County had a responsibility to address the pervasive food insecurity and in a way that would meet the demand as safely as possible. Partnering with the LA Regional Food Bank, the County began hosting large-scale food distributions on a regular basis. County employees were mobilized as disaster service workers and later the County contracted with various Conservation Corps to give youth the opportunity to serve their community. Having hosted 153 distributions to date, nearly 225,000 households have

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been served 12.7 million pounds of food. At each distribution alone, between 200 and 2,000 households are served.

Although the County continues to identify other ways to address food insecurity like increasing the number of CalFresh recipients, those efforts do not negate the need to continue large-scale food distributions during this current COVID-19 surge. These distributions also offer an effective way to communicate to County residents the availability of other resources, including the importance of COVID-19 vaccinations. In fact, several food distributions have been paired with vaccination clinics, helping us reach particularly vulnerable residents. As the health crisis continues so too does the food insecurity the County has a responsibility to address.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the Chief Executive Office, working with the Food Equity Roundtable, to:

1. Report back in thirty (30) days with data regarding the utility of the County food distributions, recommendations based on the data regarding the need to continue the food distribution program, funding streams available for future food distributions, metrics to determine the length of the food distribution program, opportunities to improve the program, should it continue (e.g., weekend hours and partnerships with community centers for more localized distributions), and areas of highest need.
2. In the interim and to ensure continuity of services while the above-requested analysis is prepared, continue the food distributions at a scale commensurate with attendance for sixty (60) days.